

Goddard takes on mail fraud

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Holding a handful of unwanted mail, Arizona Attorney General Terry Goddard on Monday announced a program to fight mail fraud.

Since April, senior volunteers from around the state saved envelopes promising money, land investment deals and mortgage refinancing solutions, Goddard said. While some of the mail is legitimate business correspondence, many of the solicitations target older residents.

"I got a foreign letter that said I had won a large sum of money," said Sunnyslope resident Dave Peterson, 84. "I brought it in. I feel if it's a good possibility it's a scam, I save them."

Every week Peterson brought in handfuls of envelopes into the Sunnyslope Village Alliance office. On Wednesdays the office serves as a satellite office for the attorney general community services program. Peterson wanted the junk mail and fraudulent offers to stop. Volunteers noticed the number of lottery winning scams from Canada and elsewhere and took Peterson's concerns to the attorney general.

Goddard thanked Peterson at the Monday junk mail meeting for his efforts to help the Seniors Strike Back program.

"I get five or six (envelopes) a day," Peterson said. "I didn't fall for any of it."

Goddard will travel around the state this month, visiting sorting events. The mail will be sorted into a dozen categories, including land investment, psychic services, mortgage, credit cards and sweepstakes. Companies from each category will then be investigated to determine who is trying to mislead or defraud Arizona residents.

"We have thousands of pieces of mail across Arizona," Goddard said. "We're going to determine what it really is. We see a lot of lottery fraud, refinancing fraud, and unregistered charities. The ones that have the most prosecution potential, we're going to prosecute."

Goddard said in many cases, people who are tempted to cash checks don't think they'll be duped. They see a check with a lot of zeros and don't pay attention to the small print, misspellings on the envelope, or the postmark from Canada.

"If it's a prize notification from Canada, it's not real," Goddard said. "Not to pick

on Canada, but 90 percent of these lottery schemes seem to come from Canada."